

Maine State Library Maine State Documents

Maine Conservation Corps Publications

Maine Conservations Corps

7-2014

Maine Conservation Connection, July 2014

Maine Conservation Corps

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalmaine.com/mcc_docs

Recommended Citation

Maine Conservation Corps, "Maine Conservation Connection, July 2014" (2014). *Maine Conservation Corps Publications*. Book 7.
http://digitalmaine.com/mcc_docs/7

This Text is brought to you for free and open access by the Maine Conservations Corps at Maine State Documents. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine Conservation Corps Publications by an authorized administrator of Maine State Documents. For more information, please contact statedocs@maine.gov.

Maine Conservation Connection

Maine Conservation Corps

July 2014

2014 Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service in Maine



Left to Right: MCCA Executive Director Maryalice Crofton, MCCA Commissioner Richard Higgins, MCC Director Jo Orlando, MCC Member Jake VanGorder, Food Corps Member Amanda Snow, MCC Member Deidrah Stanchfield, MCC Member Stuart Blanchard, Augusta Mayor William Stokes, and MCC Member Amie Daniels.

The Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) participated in this year's Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service by contacting several of Maine's cities and towns where MCC is serving currently or has served recently. Supportive Maine communities included the cities of Augusta and Hallowell, and the towns of Brunswick, Camden, and Orono. MCC asked local elected officials to recognize community service and show support for non-profit and national service groups in their communities. Two cities, Augusta and Hallowell, took the additional step of issuing formal proclamations naming April 1, 2014 National Service Recognition Day.

Mayors have a unique political role in the United States; locally elected and solution-focused, they concentrate on meeting local needs and engaging their citizens. Their mission to expand economic opportunities and create sustainable and resilient communities matches the mission of the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS): to improve lives, strengthen communities, and foster civic engagement.

The Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service highlights the positive local impact of AmeriCorps, Senior Corps, and other national service programs. It thanks national service members for their commitment. In 2013, 832 Mayors representing nearly 100 million citizens participated in the inaugural Mayors Day of Recognition for National Service. This year, 1,760 mayors nationwide touted the importance of national service. This Mayors Day initiative is led by the CNCS; Cities of Service; the National League of Cities; and Mesa, AZ Mayor Scott Smith, President of the U.S. Conference of Mayors.



MCC Represented in Washington

Krista Rogers represented the Maine Conservation Corps at The Corps Network's (TCN) annual conference in February. "TCN is the voice of the nation's 100+ Service and Conservation Corps, which operate in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Through advocacy, training and technical assistance, demonstration projects, and national grants, TCN promotes and supports the growth and quality of its member corps which, in turn, provide services and opportunities to nearly 26,000 young people each year" (TCN, 2014).



Krista Rogers stands with U.S. Senator Susan Collins at TCN's annual conference.

Krista attended several workshops on Corps diversity, mentoring, and veterans' programs, as well as the meeting of Partnership for the 21st Century Conservation Service Corps (21CSC). The 21CSC is an organization dedicated to developing partnerships between local, state, federal and non-profit agencies to engage 100,000 young people and veterans in conservation service. Krista played an integral part in MCC gaining membership to this organization in 2013: she wrote and submitted the initial proposal and clarification points. Key national leaders in both the public and private sector spoke about supporting 21CSC reach its goal, and promoting and utilizing the partnership.

In addition to all the workshops, Krista met personally with U.S. Senator Susan Collins and U.S. Senator Angus King. She spoke with them about national service in Maine, TCN, and in particular, the programs of MCC. Both Senator Collins and Senator King enjoyed hearing about how MCC contributes to the conservation of the natural resources of Maine, and how veteran programs in conservation are becoming more prominent.

Krista wrapped up her Washington adventures being snowed out of a flight home and visiting with MCC Field Team sponsors Fern Burns and George Kuck from Swan's Island at their winter home in Annapolis, Maryland.

A Place in Mind

by Sarah Kilch Gaffney

Toward the end of a long Maine winter, my husband Steve and I bought our first house. We were young and short of cash, so we were unable to realize our dream of an idyllic homestead complete with an extensive woodlot, fields, and burbling stream. What we did find, however, was a snug little house with a sizable yard and a few acres of woods.

An expansive marsh abutted the property, which was a two-fold blessing: it made our property affordable and gave us a fascinating environment to start exploring. As the world hovered on the edge of spring, we signed the papers and moved in.

When the snow receded, we found piles of asphalt shingles, countless motor oil containers, beer bottles, and other relics of the previous owner interspersed among the trees. But we also discovered peepers, which produce a symphonic wall of sound around the house each spring, and both painted and snapping turtles, which came to the yard to lay eggs. The marsh simply teemed with life: birds, insects, frogs, and sometimes the yips of coyote pups from the woods beyond.

We cleaned up the trash and planted apple trees, rhubarb, and asparagus. Each year the vegetable garden expanded a little more. We brushed out a path through the woods and our border collie burned her own track through the trees, connecting with the main path here and there. In the winter, the dogs bounded across the frozen marsh, delirious with the freedom of an unhindered run. We found pitcher plants, their intricately veined flesh frozen in the ice, wild cranberries, and beaver lodges taller than our heads. The woods were full of hemlock and cedar, with birch lining the yard, alder edging the marsh, and here and there maple, fir, and oak.

Then, at the age of 27, Steve was diagnosed with a brain tumor. It was large, challengingly located, and incurable. His doctors gave him five to ten years, if lucky, and our world spun to a halt. Treatment after treatment left him exhausted and, eventually, permanently disabled.

Soon, favorite activities like backpacking, long hikes, and maintaining our section of the Appalachian Trail were things of the past. As we adjusted to our new reality, I'd remind myself that we still had our land. On good days, Steve and I could walk down the path hand in hand; on bad days, I knew the perfect rock on which to sit and get away from the world.

When our daughter Zoe was born, our perception of what is truly important changed. Our focus became accepting and tackling the difficulties of Steve's illness while embracing the time we had left as best we could. We also discovered that there are few things in this life more hopeful than a child: she embodies more hope and strength of spirit than we ever could have summoned on our own.

When Zoe was two weeks old, we bundled her close to my chest and took her snowshoeing through the woods to the edge of the marsh. By 16 months, she insisted on tackling our beloved path on her own two slightly trippy feet. Soon, she was on her own set of snowshoes meandering down to the marsh.

One winter, following an impressive January thaw, we all traipsed out to the marsh together. It was a good day. Sprawled on our bellies, we looked down through the clearest ice I've ever seen. There were air bubbles suspended mid-ascent, lily pads, and little fish frozen just beneath the surface. Zoe was enthralled, her eyes filled with wonder, and she threw a mighty temper tantrum when it was finally time to head back home.

Though we had only an inkling of its importance that first winter, our little piece of land has now become the backbone of our life. It keeps us grounded and happy. It feeds us, challenges us, and provides adventures and life lessons. It is a playground for Zoe (not to mention for the dogs, cats, and chickens), a work in progress, and home for all of us.

Most importantly, perhaps, it is a constant in our decidedly tumultuous life. In times of crisis, there is little more comforting than the mundane, the normal: splitting wood, weeding the garden, walking to the marsh. Zoe is at the age where she asks about everything she sees, and we tell her as best we can as she wanders down the path and weaves herself between the trees: birch, hemlock, alder. Peace.

Sarah Kitch Gaffney lives in Vassalboro, Maine, with her daughter. Steve Gaffney passed away on March 22nd, 2014. Both Steve and Sarah have each served with MCC for many years. This article first appeared in the Spring, 2014 issue of Northern Woodlands and is reprinted here with their permission.

MCC Senior Team Leaders Prepare Trail Training Members



Left to Right: MCC Senior Team Leaders Lindsey May, Josh Moore, and Andrea Bachynsky.

Senior Team Leader Andrea Bachynsky : After growing up in New Jersey and attending Rutgers University, Andrea moved to Maine in 2009 to participate in MCC's Trail Training Academy. Andrea led field teams in both the summer and fall of 2009 and 2010, serving primarily on the Appalachian Trail and in Baxter State Park.

In 2011, Andrea was selected as an MCC Senior Team Leader. She later transitioned to farming, and is currently starting Honeysuckle Way (honeysucklewayflowers.com), a flower farm in Whitefield, Maine.

Still a trail worker at heart, Andrea spent time this winter and spring and summer as a part-time MCC Senior Team Leader, helping to prepare the MCC's Trail Training members and select this season's field team leaders and members.

From Dodge Point, Maine to the Gulf of Guinea

by Chris Veazie

Chris served with MCC as a summer and fall Field Team Member in 2011. At our request, he sent us this recollection of his experience with MCC and how it shaped his career path.

As an MCC Field Team Member, I had the opportunity to serve on a variety of different projects throughout Maine. I was a recent 'transplant' to Maine, and my term of AmeriCorps national service was a great way to see different parts of the state and really take in the scenery. The areas where I served with MCC field teams included Dodge Point, Swan's Island, Kennebunk Land Trust, the Wright Trail in the Mahoosucs, Mt. Blue State Park, and Bradbury Mountain State Park. The trail work was challenging, yet rewarding. The best lesson from my experience is how much can be accomplished with unsurpassed teamwork.



Pantropical spotted dolphins breaching. This active and acrobatic species is found in tropical and subtropical waters around the equator.

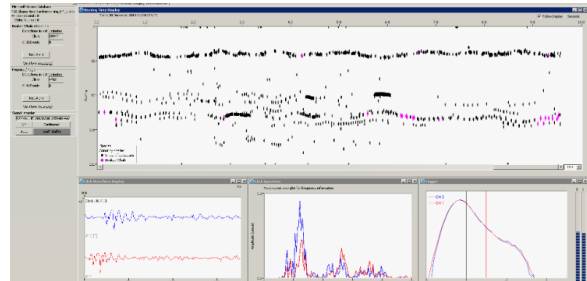
I am currently working offshore as a protected species observer / PAM (passive acoustic monitoring) operator aboard seismic research vessels. Most of my work has taken place in the Gulf of Mexico, but recently I was sent to Ghana to work in the Gulf of Guinea. As a protected species observer, I stand watch during daylight hours monitoring for the presence of whales, dolphins, and sea turtles.

When vessels are prospecting for oil and gas, they use massive amounts of acoustic energy to map the sea floor and locate oil and gas deposits. A typical, single-source vessel will have an array of 36 air guns which blast with an intensity of over 180 decibels and up to 4000 pounds-per-square-inch (PSI) or more. The shockwaves sent through the water can cause harm to any marine life present. I notify the seismic operators when it is permissible to fire the air guns and when to shut them down.

Along with standing watch, it is my job as the lead protected species observer to write the bi-weekly reports which get submitted to the B.O.E.M. (Bureau of Ocean Energy Management) and the B.S.E.E. (Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement) in order to verify no laws are broken and all operations are within compliance guidelines.

In the Gulf of Guinea, I am strictly doing passive acoustic monitoring during periods of darkness or poor visibility. I'm responsible for keeping the acoustic equipment (data processor, tow cable, and hydrophone array) in good working order. The hydrophones towing from the back of the vessel are designed to detect cetacean (whale, dolphin, and porpoise) sounds anywhere between 0 – 200 kHz.

The software recognizes the difference between anthropogenic and biological sounds. I record the raw audio and try to get range and bearing on the cetacean using the software and some trigonometry, when needed. Positive identification can be difficult without visually observing the cetacean but simply having the knowledge that there is something out there helps me make the call whether or not it is safe to start the seismic air guns.



Screenshot of the software Chris uses to analyze sound recordings

While at sea, I've been tossed out of bed in rough waters and been on a ship that caught fire (twice). There is also the threat of Nigerian pirates here in West Africa. All of this, however, is not nearly as difficult as packing in supplies up the Wright Trail and proceeding to live and serve there for nine days!

My MCC experience has been beneficial to my current occupation. As an MCC Field Team Member, I learned to endure less-than-desirable conditions along with cohesively serving with a team. Another important aspect is the ability to effectively network with your peers; an invaluable skill that will go far in anyone's professional pursuits. We all learn from our experiences, and there are plenty of experiences to be had with MCC!



Sincerely,

Chris Veazie

This material is supported by a grant to the Maine Commission for Community Service from the Corporation for National and Community Service under Corporation for National and Community Service Award 12AFHME0010001. Opinions or points of view expressed in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Maine Commission for Community Service, the Corporation for National and Community Service, or the AmeriCorps Program.